

In-laws or Out-laws

The Choice is Yours!

Who are in-laws?

1. Primary

A. Spouse's mother, father, brothers, and sisters

- Everyone has a mother and father. This is true even if there is no current contact.
- Parents can even affect a marriage from the grave.

B. Step-parents may also be included.

Who are in-laws?

2. Secondary—spouse's grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

In-laws in history

1. In much of history, couples lived with, or at least very near, their relatives. This was known as the extended family.
2. The main reasons for the change in this tradition can probably be attributed to the Industrial Revolution and advances in transportation and education.

In-laws in history

- A. These changes allowed couples to leave their hometowns easily and survive financially.
- B. This greatly reduced the need for parental help and advice, and the need for the extended family as a source of strength and support, especially in difficult times.

In-laws in history

3. In recent history, we have the nuclear family as the key social unit.
 - A. This primarily includes the parents and the children, but may also include the grandparents.
 - B. Even with grandparents, the family may live in a different city or state, thus limiting contact holidays and/or vacations.

In-laws in history

- C. This is also complicated by the growing number of families that include step-parents and step-children, which dramatically increase the number of different relationships in a family.
- D. Today, in-law issues have multiplied to present many more potential problems. Yet there are also many more chances for positive outcomes.

Successful in-law relationships

1. Leaving your father and mother (Gen. 2:24)
2. Breaking the parental bonds that tie you to your parents
 - A. Finances—you need to be totally independent
 - B. Approval—your self-image cannot be tied to your parents
 - C. Parental-style—you need to live according to your likes/dislikes (Eliminate the phrase, “Well, my family always...”)

Successful In-law relationships

- D. Any bond that is not broken will eventually lead to problems.
- E. The most important key is make your spouse number 1.
 - 1) Nothing is more important to a stable marriage and good in-law relationships.
 - 2) Never criticize your spouse to either of your parents.

Steps to positive relationships

1. Think positive.
2. Begin as early in the relationship as possible.
3. Be yourself.
4. Communicate your concerns with your spouse.
5. Don't push your spouse to break the bonds if they still exist. Each person needs to do this in his/her own way and time.

Steps to positive relationships

6. Treat your in-laws the way you desire to be treated—the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)
7. Accept your in-laws the way they are; you cannot change them.